

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/003/2001

16 January 2001

Further information on Extra 43/00 (MDE 13/07/00, 25 April 2000) and follow-up (MDE 13/31/00, 10 November 2000) - Torture/ill-treatment/prisoner of conscience

IRAN Akbar Ganji, journalist

On 13 January, the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced prisoner of conscience Akbar Ganji to 10 years' imprisonment, to be followed by five years in exile. He reportedly has 20 days in which to appeal against his sentence.

Akbar Ganji was detained after attending a social and cultural conference entitled "Iran After the Elections", organized by the Heinrich Böll Institute in Berlin in April 2000. He was charged with retaining classified documents from the Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry, insulting the former Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, and disseminating propaganda against the Islamic system.

Akbar Ganji, editor of *Fath* (Victory) newspaper, was first brought before Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on 9 November 2000. He reportedly told the court he would go on hunger strike in protest at the treatment he had suffered in Evin prison, where he was allegedly kicked and beat by four prison guards and the warden and kept in solitary confinement without access to his family or lawyer (see previous follow-up).

BACKGROUND

Six other participants at the Berlin conference have also been sentenced to prison terms as follows: Saeed Sadr, 10 years; Khalil Rostamkhani, nine years; Ezzatollah Sahabi, four years (see UA 182/00 AI Index: 13/27/00); Ali Afshari, five years; Mehrangiz Kar (f), four years and Shahla Lahiji (f), four years (see UA 103/00 AI Index: MDE 13/34/00). If these individuals have been imprisoned solely because of their attendance at the Berlin conference, Amnesty International also considers them to be prisoners of conscience. A further six participants have reportedly been acquitted.

The Iranian deputy parliamentary speaker, Mohammad-Reza Khatami, brother of President Khatami, is reported to have stated in the Iranian press that the sentences handed down to the participants of the Berlin conference were motivated by anti-reform political aims.

The Iranian authorities have been clamping down on freedom of expression since before the Berlin conference. For example, in April 2000 around 20 newspapers were closed by the Press Court. Also, other journalists including Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, Emadeddin Baqi and publisher Hojjatoleslam Abdollah Nouri have been imprisoned in connection with newspaper articles they have published.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or in your own language:

- urging that Akbar Ganji and all other prisoners of conscience be released immediately and unconditionally;
- calling for an immediate public investigation into his allegations that four prison guards and the warden of Evin prison beat and kicked him;
- seeking guarantees from the authorities that Akbar Ganji and others will be treated humanely whilst in detention and will be granted regular access to their families, lawyers and medical attention as necessary;

- urging that the charges against all individuals mentioned are reviewed and dropped upon appeal, since the existing charges do not appear to justify the convictions of the defendants.

APPEALS TO:

1)Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei,
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue,
Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Ayatollah Khamenei, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

2)President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: President Khatami, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

3)Head of Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahrudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Head of the Judiciary, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Mr Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far
Secretary, Islamic Human Rights Commission
PO Box 13165-137, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Faxes: + 98 21 204 0541

Mohsen Mirdamadi Najafabadi

Article 90 Commission (Komisyon-e Asl-e Navad)
Majles-e Shura-ye Eslami
Imam Khomeini Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Majles, Tehran
Telex: 21 42 32 ICAI IR
Faxes: + 98 21 646 1746 (Can be difficult to reach, please be patient)

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 February 2001.